

Comments to the Colorado Reapportionment Commission  
 Re: Gunnison County split and Western Slope House Districts

August 5, 2011

The Constitutional provisions regarding the "Composition of districts" tell you:

**Don't split Counties unless necessary to achieve population balance**

- It should be obvious that it is not "necessary" to divide Gunnison County, since you have seen other plans that keep Gunnison whole (along with some others that should also remain whole) while achieving the population goal.
- Rural and mountain Counties with smaller populations are particularly vulnerable to negative aspects of being split because it marginalizes any influence that is already at a disadvantage to larger Counties.
- The proposed Plan splits four out of five counties in just one House District (61) while another Plan only splits three out of six counties in HD 61, all three of which are larger counties.

**Preserve Communities of Interest**

The City of Gunnison and the Crested Butte area are proposed to be separated between two House Districts though they share much more than a County boundary. They are interdependent and linked together in all of these areas:

- **Education**
  - Gunnison and Crested Butte are both in the RE1J School District.
  - Western State College is integral to the entire County.
- **Economy**
  - We are tied together by Employment with a combined Labor Pool and Housing.
  - Many workers travel from home to work across the proposed split.
  - Businesses and customers are not separated between the north and south ends – just as Gunnison residents go skiing at Mt. Crested Butte, Crested Butte residents often shop in Gunnison or bike at Hartman Rocks.
- **Transportation**
  - Gunnison and Crested Butte are only 30 miles apart on relatively flat State Highway 135, while by comparison Gunnison and Montrose are more than twice that far apart over two mountain passes on US Highway 50.
  - Highways 135 and 50 are major connectors and access to both areas of the County. Combined Planning on these routes is important to the whole county.
  - Our commercial airport was renamed to include both Gunnison and Crested Butte due to its vital importance to both parts of the County.
- **Recreation, Arts & Cultural Activities**
  - All are shared by the entire County, with most of our population taking part in activities all around the County. It's a part of why we live here.
- **Healthcare**
  - One hospital, Senior Care facility, etc., serve the entire area.
  - Many doctors serve patients countywide.
- **Geography**
  - Our lives and lifestyles are united by our care and concern for the mountains and the clean water and fresh air of the environment we live in which traverses the entire county.

- With only 15% of the County in private lands, we all share in the combined public open space.
- **Development**
  - The County Planning Commission, which I chair, works with one set of regulations that apply countywide – as development in any given location can impact many other areas that must all be considered.
  - The County and City and Towns cooperate through 3-mile area plans and intergovernmental agreements, and communication between us is considered vital to good planning and development.
  - It is notable that when the County Master Plan was done several years ago, by design it focused on what we refer to as the Highway 135 Corridor, our area of greatest development, from the City of Gunnison on the south end to Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte on the north end. All of the areas of common interest above were key elements to development of this Master Plan.

Finally, we should all consider “priorities”. With all due respect, the Commission has its priorities dead wrong. Go back to the provisions of the Constitution and re-start there. Please, ask yourselves: Where are you told to create as many Districts as possible that favor one political Party or the other? That just isn’t your job. I commend each of you for your service on this Commission. Nevertheless, it comes with a responsibility – you are responsible to all of the people of Colorado, not to the political Party you affiliate with. Ask why are too many of your votes divided along Party lines, with the Chair having to make the deciding vote? You should not be looking at Republican Plans versus Democratic Plans – you should be considering **Colorado** Plans – Districts that allow the people and the communities to decide who their Representatives shall be, instead of voter registrations and gerrymandered artificial lines on a map. Here are the priorities the Constitution gives you:

**Don’t split Counties**  
**Combine communities of interest**

The 2002 Hobbs Decision, which I know you are all familiar with, supports everything that you have heard from this community, **to keep Gunnison County whole**. I particularly like one line from the decision that states “*The requirement of keeping Counties whole trumps the requirement of preserving communities of interest.*” I like it because it can be easily extended to say that keeping Counties whole trumps the non-requirement of creating partisan political subdivisions.

Thank you,

Ramon Reed  
 704 State Street  
 Pitkin, CO 81241

email: [ramon@reedsoftware.com](mailto:ramon@reedsoftware.com)